THE DEVIL CHAIR

A Chronicle of the Strange Adventures of John Haynes and His Gyroscope Vehicle

THE SEVEN LEAGUE BOOTS — **By H. M. EGBERT**

SUDDENLY THERE LEAPED UPON HIM A DREADFUL, SCREAMING THING THAT CAUGHT HIM BY THE THROAT WITH A GRIP OF STEEL

At one o'clock on the afternoon of April 14, 1918, a thousand newsboys ran racing through the streets of New York city, shouting at the top of their lungs and frantically waving "extras," wet from the press and smudgy with printer's ink, which were snatched up by all who could get near them. "All about the devil-chair!" they shouted. "The devil-chair runs up the cables of Brooklyn bridge!" "The devil eludes the police force of the five boroughs!" "The devil at large in New York state!" "'Shoot like a dog,' says Governor Smith!" "Extra! Extra! Ten cents, sir!"

The facts were these: About midday a crippled man in a strange wedge-shaped invalid's chair was seen by two policemen in that residential section of Brooklyn in which resided Mr. Frank Staples, the millionaire director of the Nokomis Land Development company and numerous other organizations. What seemed most curious to them was that the chair was balanced upon a single wheel, while from its interior there issued a faint buzzing sound, like that of a top humming at full speed. The cripple, having gained access to Mr. Staples' house, had forced him, at the revolver's mouth, to open his safe and hand him five thousand dollars in bills; he then made his way out of the house and limped into the chair, when he was arrested by the patrolmen, who had opportunely arrived upon the scene.

Then occurred the inexplicable feature of the performance. In the midst of a huge crowd, the cripple suddenly snatched the money out of the hand of one of the patrolmen, pressed a spring in the chair, and dashed away at the rate of a hundred and fifty miles an hour. He raced through Brooklyn, eluded the police force upon the Brooklyn bridge, and, traveling upon the single wheel, ran up the six-inch cables and down on the Manhattan side, and so made his way in safety into the northern part of New York state.

No wonder that this amazing vehicle became known as the devil-chair!

The mystery was solved about ten minutes after the first "extra" came from the press. Like all mysteries, it afforded a very simple explanation. The chair was fitted with a large gyroscope, that ingenious toy which has lately been found to possess remarkable qualities capable of being applied to traveling vehicles of all kinds. In brief, the gyroscope is simply a top which, when set spinning at any angle, retains the same plane of incidence and cannot be dislodged from it until the motive force runs down. Controlled by an ordinary gas engine, and affixed to the chair, the latter was enabled to run with perfect steadiness upon a single wheel, attaining the prodigious rate of two hundred miles an hour, while, so long as the gyroscope revolved, no mechanical force short of a trip-hammer could upset the vehicle, which could move on roads or sidewalks, or, with still greater facility, upon the single rails of train and trolley tracks, on stretched ropes, or even on telegraph wires, for the wheel was grooved for this special purpose.

Who was this crippled man who had contrived so wonderful a machine?

John Haynes was an Englishman forty years of age, and, five years before, in no wise differed from thousands of other Englishmen of good family and fair circumstances. Then the day came when he received a letter from a certain lawyer named Frank Staples, who was at that time just struggling out of want into affluence through dubious practices. Staples informed him that his uncle, one of the original settlers of Nokomis Falls, had died, leaving him sole heir to property in land, the value of which was estimated at $1,000,000. He offered to settle up the estate for that sum.

John Haynes sailed by the next steamship with his wife and daughter, surprised Staples in his office, and discovered that the value of the estate was not one but eleven millions of dollars. He threw Staples over and went west to fight his battle alone. That was the man's sterling honesty of nature and fighting quality. He would not compromise with crooks. He found that Staples had formed a company claiming the land under certain antiquated acts of the legislature. John Haynes refused five millions and began the biggest battle that the state had known.

It might have dragged on forever. It would certainly have ended in Haynes' victory. His enemies sent spies under the guise of friends, learned his strong points and his weak ones. They found, among other things, that he had an exaggerated idea of the customs prevalent in that unsettled portion of the community. A blackguard insulted his wife; his pretended friends told him, when the man came out of the hospital, that he would have to accept a challenge to fight a duel. Haynes innocently accepted the invitation, went out before daybreak, and met his adversary with a pistol from which the bullet had been secretly extracted. Both fired. John Haynes fell, crippled and paralyzed by a bullet in the spine. When he recovered consciousness he was lying in a city hospital under a different name and charged with murder.

His enemies, knowing the gigantic issues at stake, had played their last card upon the young Englishman's ignorance of American customs, and had won. Afraid to murder him when he lay bleeding and helpless upon the "field of honor," they had spirited him away to a city slum, dressed him in rags, and left him lying in an alley after a gang battle—also arranged with a dead man beside him. As Pete Timmons, a notorious gang leader, he was arraigned before a corrupt judge and sentenced to serve for fourteen years in the state penitentiary. Next day the case was discontinued; it was reported that Haynes had accepted a settlement and gone back to England; the conspirators came into possession of the land. John Haynes, in court, had reserved his defense, by the advice of his corrupt counsel, and only learned that sentence had been pronounced while he lay a helpless paralytic, in the jail hospital.

Every element in the state that should have been a force for justice was leagued against him. He never saw his wife or child again; he could learn nothing. He entered the penitentiary as Pete Timmons; when he persisted in his story he was placed in the insane ward. He learned to be silent; outwardly accepting his fate, he grew more bitter until the idea of revenge became his dominating motive.

At the end of his first year of imprisonment the first ray of hope broke in upon his soul. In the penitentiary he recognized a new face—that of a man named Ricardo, an American of Italian parentage, the blackguard with whom he had fought the mock duel that morning when he stole away from his wife and daughter to avenge the insult which had been offered to the former. Ricardo was serving a five years' sentence for burglary, which would be reduced, in practice, to about four. He made himself known to him. At first Ricardo, smarting under the failure of his confederates to save him, was inclined to listen to propositions for alliance; but when he discovered the indomintable honesty of the Englishman his mood changed. He heaped curses upon him whenever they passed and devoted his life to making the other's unbearable.

In particular he delighted in torturing Haynes about the fate of his family. That Ricardo knew where they were was clear to Haynes from certain statements which the Italian had let fall at the beginning of their association in the prison. In some way, then, Haynes must force Ricardo to tell the truth to him before he could begin to work out his revenge.

This was the man concerning whose exploits all America was now agape.

At first the idea of revenge had centered itself almost exclusively upon Ricardo. To Haynes this man embodied all the wrongs that he had endured. With that apparently unending fourteen years of imprisonment always before him, he resolved to kill Ricardo; and, because he could not match the strength of his crippled body against the Italian's, he devoted his long hours of solitary imprisonment to developing the muscles of his right arm. Some day, he knew, he would come by stealth upon his adversary, grasp him by the throat and crush the life out of his body. Within a year he had acquired the arm and fingers of a Hercules.

But within that year new hopes had come to him. He realized, when the first fit of brooding had passed, that in Ricardo alone lay the hopes of discovering where his wife and daughter were. He must save him, not kill him; but he must place him at his mercy, so that he could wring the truth from the Italian's lying lips.

One day John Haynes came upon an article in an old magazine which gave him his first coherent plan of escape. It contained a description of a new scientific toy, known as a gyroscope, together with a diagram for its construction. Within a few days, under the plea of wishing to learn a trade, he had been transferred to the machine shop.

In the machine shop, as soon as he had familiarized himself with his surroundings and had become a part of the force, Haynes worked feverishly on his machine. He had torn out and secreted the pages of the magazine describing it, had pored over them at night in his cell, straining his eyes under the light of the electric globe over the entrance until he knew each word and every line of the diagram by heart. In the machine shop no very close watch was kept upon his movements. It was comparatively simple to secrete a bolt here and a nut there and to collect them later into a remote corner of the big building. As the men were searched only when they went out, and not during the day, nothing hindered him from carrying out his plans. He forged the iron in the intervals of hammering out bolts; he threaded the screws among a hundred others; and at last the day arrived when he had his machine all but completed and hidden in a heap of waste.

On the next day the waste was sold. Haynes found the shop empty, with nothing to show for his labors. He was forced to start over again. By the time his machine was again nearing completion the third year of his imprisonment was ended.

Then he was taken out of the machine shop and set to cobbling shoes. Again his hopes were dashed to the ground. In this manner the fourth year passed. The fifth was half completed when a change of management in the penitentiary enabled him to return to the machine shop. Doggedly he began his labors once more. This time he must succeed, for Ricardo would be set free in six months' time—Ricardo, whose venom against him had but increased during the years of his imprisonment, who never passed him but with jeers and curses.

When but two months longer of the Italian's time remained to be served the gyroscope was again completed and hidden away in the new pile of waste which had accumulated. Now there remained the more difficult part, the making of the gas engine and the application of the one to the other so that the motive power could be turned on or shut off at will. The gas engine in itself was a comparatively simple affair—in fact, at the last Haynes simply appropriated one from among the constituent parts of a powerful automobile which was being manufactured for an exhibition of convict labor. The attachment device racked Haynes' brains for several days. When but a month remained, more by accident than by design he hit on the solution.

And then remained the task of making an experimental test of the mechanism. This Haynes achieved by managing to secrete himself after the order to quit work had been shouted at nightfall. When the lights had been extinguished and the door closed upon the last convict, Haynes hastily assembled the constituent parts of the gyroscope, attached them to the gas engine, and, with the medium of a few ounces of gasoline, prepared to make the test. He bound the instrument to one of his crippled feet, hobbled to the farthest corner of the room and set off the ignition spark.

Two minutes later his absence was discovered by the guards who lined up the men to count them before returning them to their cells. There was no need to speculate as to the identity of the missing man. Pete Timmons' crippled form was always conspicuous among the prisoners—and besides, Ricardo was the first to shout his name. He was a trusty now and had the charge of assisting the warders. His hatred for the convict had grown until it surpassed every other emotion; now the thought that Haynes might have escaped goaded him to a fury of rage. Shouting wildly, he ran toward the door of the machine shop, broke it open and rushed inside accompanied by the guards. The lights were turned on and Haynes was found lying unconscious against a wall with concussion of the brain.

The test had been successful beyond his wildest hopes. No sooner had the gas engine come into operation than the gyroscope, whose motive power Haynes had ignorantly turned on to the full, attached as it was to his crippled feet, carried him across the machine shop with the speed of the wind. By a miracle of luck he escaped a collision with the machines and was dashed into the opposite wall, stunned by the impact. But for the interposition of some barrels, he would have been dashed to pieces.

By another miracle, the strap that bound the gyroscope to his feet broke under the strain. When Haynes was picked up the powerful machine lay hidden from sight under a heap of scrap into which it had plunged, and there it hummed, inaudible beneath the layers that concealed it, until it ran down from want of gasoline.

When, on his return to the machine shop, the prisoner found his machine among the debris, uninjured, the hope of freedom, hitherto but dimly imagined, suddenly became a burning reality. He had accomplished all but the last step. If he could once get free of those confining walls, his gyroscope with him, he knew that escape was certain. But inside he was quite helpless. And only three weeks remained. He knew the day on which his enemy would be set free; and, if Ricardo preceded him into the world outside, his plans would be shattered probably forever.

Then came the unexpected stroke of luck which counterbalanced everything that had gone against him. Feigning that the accident had made him lose courage, Haynes had pleaded to be transferred to the shoe shop again, from which there was a desperate hope of obtaining access to the outer yard. But the prison doctor looked him over on the occasion of his last visit and noted the wasted body, the prison pallor and the cough which he had acquired from working among particles of steel.

"That man needs fresh air," he said. "Let him accompany the gangs at work on the new prison."

The edict was given out on a Friday morning. That afternoon Haynes set about taking the machine to pieces. By the time the shop was closed he had reduced it to its primitive condition of scrap metal. The searching of the men was more or less perfunctory and none of the guards suspected that "Pete Timmons" meditated escaping, for in spite of his evil record he had always proved himself to be a model prisoner. On the Saturday morning, Haynes contrived to stow away the remainder of the machine.

That afternoon, while he worked feverishly within his cell, Ricardo came merrily past, stopped and looked in. Haynes glanced up at him and stared in amazement. The man was resplendent in a new suit of blue serge; in his pockets were silver coins which he was jingling.

"Good-by, old friend," Ricardo called through the bars. "I go out under the new law today instead of Wednesday. I go to find your wife. See, I have letters from her all the time," he continued, patting his breast pocket. "Maybe you did not know. Yes, and then I find your daughter, la bella Eleanora. Maybe I like her better than your wife, and maybe not so well—time will show. We meet again, in nine years, is it not?" he ended reflectively. He stretched out his hand warily. "Good-by, old friend. Maybe you see me Monday, maybe not."

On Monday, Haynes carried a few fragments of his machine out of the prison, riding in the contractor's cart, beside which trudged the convicts and their guards. The breath of the fresh air, the blue sky, the freedom of the waste country, stunned him; at first he could not think.

Stretched out upon the rocks among the toiling men he ruminated bitterly. His hatred for Ricardo now almost transcended his longing for freedom.

A shadow fell across him. He looked up. Ricardo stood near in his new suit, juggling his money.

"Good morning, dear friend," he murmured, warily keeping out of the way of Haynes' anticipated reach. "I came to tell you that I seen your daughter. She mighty fine girl, I tell you Pete. Soon, maybe, we go to Italy together."

Goaded by the wretch's lying words, Haynes struck at him wildly with his crutch. Ricardo merely leaped nimbly aside and mocked his impotent victim. A guard came running up.

"Hey! Beat it!" he shouted, leveling his rifle. "Beat it or I'll fill you with lead. God help me, I'll do that, if I catch you talking to my men again!"

Ricardo strode sullenly away, pausing only to wave his hand to his enemy.

By Friday Haynes had set up his machine in the hollows of the boulders. His heart was burning in his breast; he scarcely slept a moment thinking of Ricardo and of the need of wringing the truth from his lying lips. Twice since that Monday he had seen him in the distance, now bobbing up with a mocking salutation among the rocks, now waving to him from a hiding place among the trees. Why he took so keen a delight in disturbing him, Haynes did not know. He could not know that Ricardo had been commissioned by Haynes' enemies to keep in touch with him so long as he was outside the walls, and so less secure; on the other hand, neither could Ricardo know that, hidden in the rocks, complete even to the gasoline which the cripple had discovered in one of the contractor's carts, the terrible machine lay waiting to work upon its master's bidding. Nor that, on the following day, Haynes was to put his long cherished plan into effect.

He had planned it so perfectly, this first act in his revenge, that he could gloat over it, even to the minutest detail. Haynes had learned from observation, for instance, the times of the trains that passed the prison site; he knew them all, from the expresses to the locals, and had jotted down the hours and minutes upon the tablets of an almost perfect memory. And, since each day's delay was dangerous, and since the order for his return to his cell might be forthcoming at the week's end, he prayed with all his soul that Ricardo would be there on the Saturday.

He did return. He crept up under the shadow of the boulders under which Haynes was seated, fastening the gyroscope to one of his crippled feet. The Englishman had contrived this strap of his to a nicety. While it bound fast the gyroscope, it also passed over the other foot, fastening the two feet together, and thus converting him into a sort of statue. Haynes could balance himself without effort upon either foot, by reason of the peculiar nature of his paralysis, which, when he stood, pulled fast the tendons of either foot in exactly the manner of a fowl's muscles when it roosts, which fasten it to its perch without an effort. Haynes had everything completed at the exact moment when his divine luck brought Ricardo under the rock, not ten paces away. The guards were at the other end of the long line of men, and the Italian ventured nearer. A hundred paces away stretched the shining metals, and the north-bound express was already rumbling in the distance. It would rush northward on its way to Nokomis without stopping, and ten minutes later, would possibly have timed Ricardo's appearance more ingeniously.

"My friend," hissed the Italian from among the rocks, "I come to say good-by. I go away—maybe. She damn fine girl, Mees Eleanor, and she and me got marriage license yesterday and get married. Now she make damn fine bride. Good-by, friend Timmons. Tomorrow maybe we be en route for Italy—and maybe not. We think of you much. Maybe we pray for you. Maybe we come back in nine years more, and maybe not. Good-by, old Pete."

Goaded to desperation, though he knew there was not a fragment of truth in his enemy's taunting words, Haynes swung round his crutch and missed. Ricardo waved his hand mockingly and turning his back, started quickly back along the road. He knew that Haynes could never reach him. He did not even turn his head until it was pulled backward upon his shoulders. For suddenly there leaped upon him a dreadful, screaming thing that caught him by the throat with a grip of steel, beat him down, struck him, trampled on him; and, even as his screams grew fainter and the guards came running up, Ricardo felt himself borne off as by a whirlwind and hurtling through the air as in a nightmare.

Bullets were whistling over Haynes' head and he laughed loudly. It was delicious; this quaint fulfillment of the dream which he had cherished through five long years of agony, exactly as he had planned it; and the guards might just as well have fired at the sun, or at the rushing winds. For now Haynes was upon the metals and speeding far away in the wake of the north-bound express train that had come hurtling past, following it upon a single rail, holding up his enemy with ease with his strong right arm, while with the left he pounded him mechanically until the weak muscles tired.

And now he began to hear the roar of the approaching southward train upon the alternate track, and bending down as he ran, he half shut off the motive power, so that he moved comparatively slowly. He saw the train flash round the bend of the line, a dreadful thing, a smoking monster with a hiss of noisome breath and glowing eyes. Ricardo saw it and understood and uttered a wild scream of terror and prayer. And Haynes, holding him firmly with his mighty right arm, hissed into his ear:

"Where are they?"

A babbling cry issued from the Italian's foam-flecked lips:

"Ask Jack Poole at Grand Valley, northern New York."

Haynes hesitated one instant, and then, with a thrust of his arm, he pushed the Italian down the side of the embankment, away from the train as it swept past him. He ran on exultantly for miles, shouting deliriously in his happiness. Afterward, when the sense of self-preservation was renewed in him, he returned. He found the Italian lying in a crumpled heap at the bottom of the embankment, and after satisfying himself that his enemy was only stunned, he stripped him of his clothes and the few dollars he carried, left his own uniform beside the track, and set off at full speed along the metals eastward.

Line of Least Resistance.

The waiter, in wishing me good morning, remarked that the day was much colder. I had as a matter of fact thought it particularly close and muggy, but I agreed with him. At the cloak-room, where a man, at a daily remuneration of sixpence, takes charge of a hat and coat that would repose on a chair beside me for nothing, had I the courage, I was told that the weather seemed much more promising; and again I agreed, although I had no such belief. Finally, the splendid creature who, in return for more money, blows the whistle once for a cab for me, said that it was a nice day on the whole; and once more I agreed. But what I want to know is, what does the Recording Angel do about this kind of thing?—Punch.

Man a Woman Likes.

I do not think I have any definite opinion as to what sort of a man women like best, says Elinor Glyn in the Strand. It always seems to me the sex is divided into two general types—the women who want to rule, and the women who want to be ruled. Each type naturally prefers a different sort of man. And, while women keep the ideal of what they would prefer somewhere in their imagination, they succumb to the attractions of the most incredible creatures. But this is a great truth, that you can judge of the woman individually by the sort of man she attracts. Or I should say, the sort of men she attracts, because they are generally of the same type. Like draws like.

Probably Assumed.

"Automobile foot" is a new disease for which Dr. Alexander Block of St. Louis stands sponsor. Automobile foot, due to lack of pedestrian exercise among automobilists, is a weakness that changes the walk into an ugly hobble.

"The automobile habit is so widespread," said Dr. Block the other day, "that our ignorance of walking threatens to equal the broker's ignorance, real or assumed, of farm life.

"A broker spent the Christmas holidays on a Georgia farm. The farmer said to him, as he came back one morning from a before-breakfast stroll:

"'Been out to hear the haycocks crow, I suppose?'

"'Yes,' answered the broker—'and to tie a knot in a cord of wood and watch the hired man milk the milkweed.'"

Hunger the Least of His Troubles.

A Dayton, Ohio, newspaper, in reciting some of the tragic scenes which occurred in that city during the recent flood, recounts this episode, which goes to show that even the most awful disasters are not without their occasional tinges of humor: A fat man was sitting astride the roof of a barn floating complacently down the stream. Some of the rescuers on the bank yelled to him and asked him if he was hungry. "Hungry? No! There are fourteen hens in the hayloft and they lay twelve eggs a day!"

HOME TOWN HELPS

MOVE TO ABOLISH FENCES

Pittsburgh Newspaper Regards Idea With Favor, but Has Doubt of Its Practicability.

Baltimore comes forward with a community back yard idea, already the subject of practical experiment in that city, remarks the Pittsburgh Dispatch. It aims to abolish the unsightly back yard and its rubbish-hiding fences, and to create instead a neighborhood open space or park and playground that would keep the children off the streets and offer residents instead of a little cooped-up and practically useless piece of private domain a chance to stretch themselves and enjoy a freedom of movement to be had in no other way.

A correspondent who directs attention to the scheme suggests that it might be expanded into a factor in reducing the cost of living if the community would devote part of the open space to growing fruit or garden truck.

Admirable as the idea may seem in the abstract, it may be questioned whether neighborhood human nature has arrived at the perfection necessary to its success. It is not difficult to imagine a refractory resident angered by some neighbor spoiling the whole plan by restoring his fences. It may be doubted, too, whether this could be avoided by any binding agreement being secured in advance. Then, also, there is always the possibility of an untidy neighbor mussing up the community back yard, of clothesline fights and dogs and chickens and all the numerous troubles that add spice if not sweetness to neighborhood existence.

GOOD IN GARDEN MOVEMENT

City of Duluth Has Demonstrated That It Is of Value in Many Different Ways.

In the summer of 1913, the Duluth Commercial club obtained three vacant lots in different parts of the city and put a man in charge of the three tracts. He conducted demonstration gardening through the season; was always available to help puzzled gardeners; guided the school children in their work, and otherwise stimulated the garden movement in the city.

From an importer of garden products, Duluth became at least a producer of its own supplies. Duluth's hinterland is developing agriculturally, but the garden movement in the city has lost none of its significance. It has promoted the ownership of many homes; it has drawn children from the street and made them garden enthusiasts; it has induced greater efficiency among wage-earners through contentment and more healthful surroundings, and it has made Duluth a city of gardens beautiful to behold.

Of greater value to Duluth is the moral effect on the city. The rising generation is one of gardeners. Factory workers and office employes not only raise their own vegetables, but they have developed their bodies by the exercise. The demand for saloons, gambling houses and similar resorts is dying out.

Camphor Trees for Streets.

A trade journal quotes a Texas nurseryman as saying that the camphor tree is very popular for street planting in the southern part of that state; that it is never troubled by insect pests and that mosquitoes will avoid it.

No tree is exempt from insect pests, and camphor trees may be found with such a thick incrustation of the red scale of the orange that bark on twigs may scarcely be seen. Mosquitoes avoid camphor and its fumes and therefore will not literally "roost" upon the tree, but they do not avoid the general territory in which it grows. The camphor tree is a prime favorite in southern California and we do not allow fear of insect pests to deter us from planting it wherever and whenever opportunity presents.—Los Angeles Times.

Encouragement of Thrift.

In Chicago there has been started an association for the encouragement of thrift. Far-seeing men are behind the movement, confronted with the enormous waste in time, opportunity, and material which has been a natural inheritance from a generation that found everything to spare at hand. This condition no longer exists. A changed economic condition calls for changed methods of living, to which the people must be educated. As the lasting and formative influences are those belonging to childhood, the school garden may be counted upon to play no small part in bringing about a better understanding of the elements of living, all the way from the market basket onward to the best that goes to make happy and prosperous homes.

Does More Harm Than Good.

The charity is bad which takes from independence its proper pride and from mendicity its salutary shame.—Southey.

His Own Detective.

In Schenectady, N. Y., a farmer recognized in a leather shop the green hide of a horse which had been stolen from him but two weeks before. By means of the hide he traced the thief and eventually was paid for the horse.

Thing of Most Importance.

"What matters the nature of our work so long as it is well done? We do not glean happiness according to our station in life, but according to how well we adapt ourselves to that station."